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CENTRAL TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES IN TURKEY

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Comment: The following information based on Turkish newspapers for the period 17 August 1952 - 23 February 1953, gives further details on the activities of the national labor confederation. The development of the national labor movement in Turkey has previously been reported

In its 15 November issue, Gece Postasi reported that Turk-Is (Confederation of Turkish Workers Syndicates) had drawn up the following 6-month working program:

November

Publishing decisions of the September meeting of the Turk-Is congress, assembling information on Turkish labor organizations, settling problems affecting Izmir maritime workers, printing Turk-Is dues stamps, preparing desired labor legislation to be given to worker deputies for submission to the Grand National Assembly, and making efforts to assure that standard wage schedules are applied in all Monopoly Administration establishments.

December

Collecting member groups' ideas on desired labor legislation, delimiting areas of regional federation, selecting a regulations committee, studying the Labor Ministry organization law, and submitting a formal request to the government for creation of assistant labor inspectors.

January

Survey to determine the number of business establishments and workers in Turkey, study to determine defects in existing workers' insurance laws, efforts to stop importation of goods produced in sufficient quantities in Turkey, initiation of contacts regarding the establishment of a workers' bank.

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February

Initiation of preparation of a strike-law bill, efforts to secure amendment of the syndicate and worker courts laws, adoption of a badge in the form of a rosette for Turk-Is members, and commissioning of a workers' march.

March

Initiation of efforts to secure amendment of the Labor Law, efforts to secure a full day's pay for Sunday instead of half pay as at present, and preparation of a model regulation for business establishments.

April

Attempts to secure nationwide application of a minimum wage schedule and preparation of a 6-month activity report.(1)

The same newspaper reported on 12 November that the Turk-Is executive committee had been working to organize syndicates and unions of syndicates not currently affiliated with Turk-Is and to secure establishment of professional federations in fields of endeavor not yet organized into federations. The confederation, continued the paper, is planning to divide the country into 14 areas and to group all syndicates in these areas into regional federations. According to the paper, the regions will be: Thrace, Istanbul, Marmara, Kocaeli, Aegean, Western Anatolia, Southern Anatolia, Sakarya, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Ankara, Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia. In order for these federations to work successfully, added Gece Postasi, the committee will determine the matters to be handled by each echelon of the labor movement, i.e., syndicates, unions of syndicates, regional and professional federations, and the confederation.(2)

On 22 December, Yeni Istanbul mentioned the existence of a Sakarya Bolgesi Isci Sendikaları Federasyonu (Sakarya Regional Federation of Worker Syndicates) (3), while Vatan, on 23 February, gave the additional information that the federation's president was Ahmet Aras and its legal advisor was Tahsin Atakan.(4) Zafer, on the same day, identified Aras as the federation's secretary general. Much earlier, on 17 August, Ankara Telgraf had reported the existence of a Samsun Isci Sendikaları Federasyonu (Samsun Federation of Worker Syndicates), which includes all Black Sea coastal worker syndicates, and an Akdeniz Isci Sendikaları Federasyonu (Federation of Mediterranean Worker Syndicates).(5)

The problem of the above-mentioned workers' bank was mentioned on 14 February by Yeni Istanbul, which reported that in a talk in Izmir, Samet Agaoglu, Labor Minister, had touched on the subject and had indicated that the bank would have a capital of 10-15 million lira, to be obtained from employers and from annual bonuses received by workers. The basic aim of the bank, according to the paper, will be to make it possible for every worker to own his own home. However, added the paper, the bank will also extend other types of credit and will engage in general banking activity.(6) On 18 December, Cumhuriyet reported that the executive committee of Turk-Is had begun efforts designed to help the government carry out its commitment on this matter and was contacting all Turkish syndicates with a view to raising 250,000 lira in capital. The committee has also decided to send out a delegation to contact the broad masses of workers, added the paper.(7)

According to Gece Postasi of 16 September, the second Turk-Is congress will be held in 1955 in Istanbul, which means that unless a special meeting becomes necessary before then, the present executive committee, composed of Ismail Inan, Muammer Ozerkan, and Ismail Aras, will hold office until then. The paper commented that it is significant that leaders of syndicates, unions of syndicates,

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federations, and other labor organizations have refrained from presenting themselves as candidates for membership on the Turk-Is executive committee. The paper attributed this situation to a reluctance to give up job seniority because of a feeling that the confederation is an adventure and that its chances for success are not too high. The paper feels that another restraining factor is the necessity for committee members to live in Ankara.(8)

A move to expand Turk-Is was reported on 5 January by Millet, which said that a delegation had been sent to Zonguldak to persuade the Zonguldak Maden Iscileri Sendikasi (Zonguldak Mine Workers Syndicate) to join Turk-Is. The paper commented that this syndicate, with 40,000 members, is the largest in Turkey.(9)

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1. Istanbul, Gece Postasi, 15 Nov 52
2. Ibid., 12. Nov 52
3. Istanbul, Yeni Istanbul, 22 Dec 52
4. Istanbul, Vatan, 23 Feb 53
5. Ankara, Ankara Telgraf, 17 Aug 52
6. Yeni Istanbul, 14 Dec 52
7. Istanbul, Cumhuriyet, 18 Dec 52
8. Gece Postasi, 16 Sep 52
9. Ankara, Millet, 5 Jan 53

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